

ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

Medical Officer of Health

TO THE

Okehampton District Council,

ACTING AS

The Rural Sanitary Authority.

1900.

EXETER :

PRINTED AT THE "DAILY WESTERN TIMES" OFFICE.

To the Okehampton Rural District Council.

Annual Report of Medical Officer of Health,

1900.

GENTLEMEN,

I have the honour of submitting to you my Eleventh Annual Report upon the health of your District.

Area of District 114,556 acres.

Population (estimated) 14,381.

VITAL STATISTICS.

Births—Only 277 births were registered (144 males and 133 females) giving a rate of 19.2 per 1,000. In 1899 the rate was 20.6 per 1,000. The number of births in the District is certainly diminishing, probably the result in the main of the migration of the young people into the larger towns.

Deaths—212 deaths were registered during the year (115 males and 97 females) giving a rate of 14.7 per 1,000. In 1899 there were 203 deaths with a rate of 14.1 per 1,000.

The natural increase—excess of births over deaths—is 65. In 1899 it was 94, and in 1898, 104.

In giving the usual table of the various birth and death rates in the sub-districts, I must point out that early in the year an alteration took place in the North Tawton and Okehampton sub-districts. North Tawton took over the South Tawton and Belstone parishes, giving to the Okehampton sub-district the parish of Exbourne.

| SUB REGISTRATION DISTRICTS. | BIRTHS. | | | | | DEATHS. | | | |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------|--------|----------|--------|-------------------|---------|----------|--------|--------------------|
| | Population (Estim't'd) | Males. | Females. | Total. | Rate per 1000. | Males. | Females. | Total. | Rate per 1,000. |
| Bratton Clovelly | 1749 | 16 | 16 | 32 | 18.2 | 20 | 16 | 36 | 20.5 |
| Chagford ... | 2621 | 29 | 28 | 57 | 21.7 | 27 | 12 | 39 | 14.8 |
| Hatherleigh ... | 3233 | 36 | 35 | 71 | 21.9 | 23 | 22 | 45 | 13.9 |
| North Tawton... | 4873 | 50 | 27 | 77 | 15.8 | 35 | 29 | 64 | 13.1 |
| Okehampton ... | 1905 | 13 | 27 | 40 | 21.0 | 10 | 18 | 28 | 14.6 |
| Totals ... | 14,381 | 144 | 133 | 277 | 19.2 | 115 | 97 | 212 | 14.7 |

It will be noticed that Hatherleigh and Chagford have the highest birth rates, and that North Tawton has by far the lowest.

North Tawton has the lowest death rate, and Bratton Clovelly has the highest. The death rate of Bratton Clovelly is higher than the birth rate.

Age at Death—There were 23 deaths of Infants under one year of age, giving a rate of 83.0 per 1,000 births. This may be looked upon as fairly satisfactory, and below the average. Chagford had by far the lowest Infantile death rate, and Bratton Clovelly the highest, mainly due to epidemics of whooping cough and measles.

102 of the deaths were in persons over 65 years of age, that is nearly 50 per cent of the total deaths.

Causes of Death—There were 15 deaths due to Zymotic disease, viz. :—

| | | | | |
|----------------|---|--|------------|---|
| Whooping Cough | 6 | | Diphtheria | 1 |
| Measles | 7 | | Diarrhoea | 1 |

Giving a rate of just above 1.0 per 1,000. The corresponding rate last year was 1.4 per 1,000.

The highest Zymotic rate was in the Bratton Clovelly district. Chagford district was entirely free.

Influenza—Six deaths were due to this disease, directly or indirectly, I have no doubt it was a factor in the causation of others. North Tawton had the largest rate. Okehampton was the only free sub-district.

Consumption—This disease caused 14 deaths, as against 16 in 1899. Bratton Clovelly, as usual, had the largest per centage. Okehampton was free.

Bronchitis and Pneumonia caused 38 deaths, 20 of these were registered in the North Tawton sub-district.

Heart Disease—18 deaths were attributed to heart disease. They were fairly evenly distributed.

Cancer—This disease caused 12 deaths—a larger number than I have so far reported. Okehampton, Hatherleigh and Chagford had the largest number.

Accidents—Five deaths were accidental, viz.: two from scalds, one from burns, one from injury to head as the result of a fall, and one from the falling of a wall.

In addition one death in an old man was attributed to exposure.

Suicidal—One death was suicidal, the result of a gun shot wound.

INFECTIOUS DISEASES OF THE YEAR.

The list of infectious diseases notified is a small one. The following table gives the parishes affected.

| Parishes. | Scarlet Fever. | Diphth'ria | Erysipelas |
|--------------------|-------------------|------------|------------|
| Bridestowe ... | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| Bondleigh ... | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| Hatherleigh ... | 0 | 0 | 4 |
| Inwardleigh ... | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| Jacobstowe ... | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| North Tawton ... | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Sampford Courtenay | 2 | 0 | 1 |
| South Tawton ... | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| Okehampton ... | 5 | 0 | 6 |
| Totals ... | 13 | 1 | 16 |

In this place it will be as well to tabulate the cases of infectious disease notified since the adoption of the Act, as it embraces a period of ten years. It will be noticed that the last five years of that period show a marked reduction in all the notifiable diseases except in the case of erysipelas.

List of infectious diseases notified 1891-1900.

| Year. | Scarlet Fever. | Diphth'ria | Enteric Fever. | Erysipelas | Puerperal Fever. | Small Pox. |
|-------|-------------------|------------|-------------------|------------|---------------------|---------------|
| 1891 | 22 | 12 | 5 | 10 | 0 | 0 |
| 1892 | 80 | 15 | 3 | 5 | 1 | 0 |
| 1893 | 114 | 13 | 2 | 6 | 0 | 7 |
| 1894 | 136 | 7 | 6 | 16 | 0 | 2 |
| 1895 | 11 | 12 | 10 | 5 | 0 | 0 |
| 1896 | 16 | 4 | 5 | 9 | 1 | 0 |
| 1897 | 6 | 1 | 2 | 7 | 0 | 0 |
| 1898 | 8 | 16 | 4 | 9 | 1 | 0 |
| 1899 | 17 | 3 | 11 | 10 | 0 | 0 |
| 1900 | 13 | 1 | 0 | 16 | 0 | 0 |

As regards the outbreaks of infectious disease in 1900.

Scarlet Fever—Early in the year there was an outbreak in Lang Down school (South Tawton parish). The disease was of a mild type. The school was closed.

In the summer and autumn, cases of the disease cropped up in Inwardleigh and Okehampton parishes. The disease was of a mild type, but it was thought advisable to close the Inwardleigh school.

At the end of the year I received information of an outbreak of disease at Whiddon Down school, I visited and found several of the children desquamating. From the history it appears they were ill with sore throat which kept them away from school for a few days, many had rashes but none were ill enough for a doctor to be called in. The disease was probably Scarletina of mild type.

Diphtheria—The solitary case of diphtheria notified, occurred at an isolated house in Bondleigh parish. The patient (a woman) had recently been confined. The disease proved fatal. The house was disinfected and there was no spread.

Erysipelas—Okehampton had the largest number of cases of this disease, as was also the case in 1899. The cases were apparently unconnected with each other, occurring at places widely apart.

Influenza—This disease was widely prevalent in the early part of the year. All parts of the district seemed to be impartially affected.

Measles—This disease was prevalent in the summer, affecting mainly the following parishes :—Bratton Clovelly, Germansweek, North Lew, Inwardleigh and North Tawton. In the North Lew area it was most fatal, due mainly to a concurrent epidemic of whooping cough. The schools in the above parishes were closed on account of the disease.

Whooping Cough was present during the summer in the parishes of North Lew, Bratton Clovelly, Hatherleigh and Okehampton.

INSPECTORS' REPORTS.

Mr. Hooper.

| | | | |
|--|----|----|------|
| Notices served | .. | .. | 22 |
| Nuisances abated | .. | .. | 15 |
| Disinfectants supplied | .. | .. | 4 |
| Houses, &c., disinfected | .. | .. | 5 |
| New water supplies provided | .. | .. | 5 |
| Wells cleaned and purified | .. | .. | 4 |
| Water supplies improved | .. | .. | 5 |
| Houses lime-washed | .. | .. | 6 |
| Houses drained | .. | .. | 12 |
| New closets provided | .. | .. | 8 |
| Visits to bake-houses, slaughter-house and lodging-houses | .. | .. | } 26 |
| Certificates for new houses | .. | .. | |
| | | | 10 |

Mr. Smale's Report.

| | | | |
|-----------------|----|----|----|
| Notices served | .. | .. | 30 |
| Drains unchoked | .. | .. | 6 |

| | | | |
|-----------------------------|----|----|----|
| New closets provided | .. | .. | 4 |
| New Water supplies | .. | .. | 3 |
| Nuisances abated | .. | .. | 15 |
| Drains repaired | .. | .. | 7 |
| Houses lime-washed | .. | .. | 6 |
| Schools disinfected | .. | .. | 2 |
| Houses disinfected | .. | .. | 2 |
| Cess pits cleaned out | .. | .. | 3 |
| Visits to bake-houses, &c. | .. | .. | 19 |
| Horse buried | .. | .. | 1 |
| Certificates for new houses | .. | .. | 8 |

PUBLIC WORK.

North Tawton—In the early part of the year, complaints were made of the pollution of the river Taw by unpurified sewage passing into it, due to the farmer allowing it to run into the river without passing it over and through the land which was “laid for hay.”

It was proposed to treat the sewage on the septic tank principle during these few weeks, but fortunately a neighbouring land owner gave his consent to its being passed over his land during the time.

With the area of the land available, there should be no difficulty in dealing with the sewage in a satisfactory manner. Proper supervision is, however, necessary. Growing vegetation will deal with a large quantity of sewage, but it must have periods of rest. It is this point which seems to be forgotten.

Water Supply—This ran short during the summer months; especially as regards the upper part of the town. As I pointed out at the time, sufficient care in distributing was not taken.

The scheme for augmenting the present supply makes slow progress. Legal points are the main cause of delay. It is stated that a good supply of water has been tapped above Bouchier's Hill. If this should prove to be the case, the cost of bringing in a supply would be materially diminished.

Chagford—An additional spring of water has been taken, in order to increase the present supply which was found to be inadequate during the height of the summer, when there is a large influx of visitors.

Sewerage—Complaints as regards two of the sewage out-falls have been made during the year. Four or five visits have been made in consequence, on one occasion meeting a local Committee to inspect matters, and discuss the situation. Briefly the matter is this: Chagford stands on a hill with a good fall for its drainage, the bulk of which is discharged by three separate out-falls and treated by irrigation over land during seven or eight

months in the year. The remaining three or four months, the sewage (after passing along trenches for a good distance, with a certain amount of purification taking place in its course) entered a sort of pond from which the solid matter was more or less often taken out. The system gave rise to no great complaint until the Town began to grow and that fairly rapidly. The sewers have already been extended. The amount of land available is still sufficient to allow of the sewage being properly treated by irrigation during the whole of the year, but the owner of the land still holds out for irrigation being suspended for three or four months. To meet this difficulty a simple method of filtration has been devised for these three or four months; the expense will not be great even if the experiment does not succeed. With attention though, I think the prospect of its doing so is good.

Exbourne—The pit at the mouth of the main sewer of this Village has been filled up as it was liable to cause a nuisance.

At the school in this Village the sanitary accommodation has been improved. The school at present is not well ventilated.

Drewsteignton—At the request of the Parish Council, I visited this Village to inspect an old well which it was proposed to utilize again.

The water, on analysis, was found of fair quality, and would doubtless improve after cleaning out the well, &c. As an unsocketted drain however, ran a few feet away I advised that it should not be used until the drain was made good.

South Tawton—The iron pipe conveying water to the Village became choked up owing to the action of the water on the iron. It was cleaned out.

South Zeal—The drainage of this Village being in an unsatisfactory condition I met a committee of the District Councillors for the parish, and Members of the Parish Council to consider the matter. As a result the Sanitary Inspector was asked to prepare plans for draining the Village. This he did, but the parishioners were frightened at the cost, and asked if something less expensive would not suffice. There is no doubt that the Village has been going back for some years past, and much of the property is in a poor condition.

The matter has consequently been referred back to the Inspector and myself.

Beaworthy—Through the munificence of Mr. Medley a Cottage Hospital has been erected in Beaworthy parish, intended primarily for the use of the neighbouring Villages in our district and that of Holsworthy. The Hospital is thoroughly up-to-date as regards its sanitation and equipment, and should be of very great benefit to the district.

Hatherleigh—The water supply has held out satisfactorily throughout the year.

Sewerage—The sewage is now treated by irrigation over a large surface of land. Latterly there has been no pollution of the river, though the method of disposal is not all that can be desired, as some of the sewage flows into a pond. This is undesirable although it causes no nuisance. The owner of the land is however taking steps to improve matters, which I hope will be successful.

As I pointed out in dealing with the North Tawton sewage, attention to distributing is an important factor in getting good results with irrigation.

Sticklepath—Some little difficulty has arisen here owing to the owner of the field on which the sewage flows, having given a three months notice to take the sewage elsewhere. This will mean some expense.

ROUTINE WORK.

The usual inspection of portions of the district (in some cases house to house) have been carried out during the year. On the report of infectious disease, the infected place has at once been visited and steps taken to prevent its spread.

Water Analysis—The usual number of samples of water have been examined during the year. The public supplies of Hatherleigh, North Tawton and Chagford have been examined and found satisfactory.

Bake-houses and Slaughter-houses—These are inspected by myself, generally once or twice a year, in addition to the inspections by the Sanitary Inspectors. Some of the slaughter-houses require a lot of looking after as their surroundings are not kept so clean as they should be.

Lodging-house—The solitary common lodging-house in the district has been inspected, and found satisfactory.

Pig Styes—There have not been many complaints during the year, but many of them are not kept in a satisfactory state, especially those at isolated cottages, away from the main roads.

Nuisances from the keeping of fowl in small back yards are occasionally met with.

Lime-washing of Houses—As a result of the house to house inspections, notices were served for the lime-washing of houses in ten or twelve instances. In about an equal number of cases the work was done without special notice on its being pointed out to the occupier that it required doing.

Overcrowding—No case was brought forward during the year.

Housing of the Working Classes—No houses have been condemned as unfit for human habitation during the year. In several cases however structural alterations have been carried out.

Looking back over the last ten years there has been a decided improvement in the cottages. This improvement has been brought about partly by the endeavours of the sanitary authority, and partly as the result of the falling off of the population in some of the Villages. As the rural exodus goes on the worst of the cottages become untenanted, and fall into a state of ruin. New cottages are very rarely erected in our district.

Cow-sheds and Dairies—As has been pointed out in my Annual Reports before, there is room for great improvement in the attention paid to our milk supply. Cattle are housed in sheds which, in many instances, sadly lack all attempts at sanitation. There are overcrowding, lack of light and ventilation, and the very rudest signs of drainage. In order to get in a line with the other parts of the country, it is necessary that steps should be taken to improve this condition of affairs.

For some little time past the United Devon Association has been taking steps in various directions to make the County more known to holiday makers, and those looking out for a fixed place of residence.

This desirable endeavour could, and should be materially assisted by the sanitary authorities throughout the County, improving the health conditions of the people under their care. One of the most important ways of doing this is by systematic inspection of a district. As I have before pointed out, the visit of the Sanitary Inspector not only leads to improvement of the house and its surroundings, but is at the same time an object lesson in the cause of sanitation.

For the first five years that I was your Medical Officer of Health we had one Inspector (Mr. Hooper) who did nothing else but sanitary work. The taking over of the roads led to a change. Two Surveyors were appointed who were also Sanitary Inspectors. After five years experience of each of these arrangements, I feel sure that more sanitary work was done in the former period than the latter. Both Mr. Hooper and Mr. Smale are hard working, able and conscientious men, but with the amount of road work under their control—work which must be attended to, as it is constantly under survey—the time available for sanitary work is reduced to small proportions. It would be advisable to go back to the old plan of having one man for sanitary work only, even if it is necessary to keep two for the road work.

Appended are tables supplied by the Local Government Board at the suggestion of the Society of Medical Officers of Health. They differ from those used in previous Reports.

I remain, Gentlemen,

Your obedient Servant,

EDWARD H. YOUNG, M.D., D.P.H.,

Medical Officer of Health.

Okehampton, January 19th, 1901.

TABLE I.

| Year. | Population estimated to Middle of each Year. | Births | | Deaths under One Year of Age | | Deaths at all Ages. Total. | | Deaths in Public Institutions. |
|------------------------------|--|--------|--------|------------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------|--------|--------------------------------|
| | | Number | Rate * | Number | Rate per 1,000 Births regist'rd | Number | Rate * | |
| 1890 | 14381 | 363 | 25.2 | 44 | 121.2 | 270 | 18.7 | |
| 1891 | " | 379 | 26.4 | 40 | 105.5 | 237 | 16.4 | |
| 1892 | " | 329 | 22.1 | 24 | 73.0 | 220 | 15.2 | |
| 1893 | " | 387 | 26.9 | 21 | 54.2 | 225 | 15.6 | |
| 1894 | " | 335 | 23.2 | 34 | 101.1 | 228 | 15.8 | |
| 1895 | " | 369 | 25.6 | 37 | 100. | 248 | 17.2 | |
| 1896 | " | 328 | 22.8 | 26 | 79. | 180 | 12.5 | |
| 1897 | " | 316 | 21.9 | 36 | 113. | 205 | 14.2 | |
| 1898 | " | 319 | 22.1 | 34 | 106. | 211 | 14.6 | |
| 1899 | " | 297 | 20.6 | 35 | 117. | 203 | 14.1 | |
| Averages for years 189 -1899 | 14381 | 342.2 | 23.68 | 33.1 | 97. | 222.7 | 15.43 | |
| 1900 | 14381 | 277 | 19.2 | 23. | 83. | 212 | 14.7 | 1 |

* Rates calculated per 1,000 of estimated population.

TABLE II.

| Year | BRATON CLOVELLY. | | | | CHAGFORD. | | | | HATHERLEIGH. | | | | NORTH TAWTON. | | | | OKEHAMPTON. | | | |
|---|--|-----------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|--|-----------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|--|-----------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|--|-----------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|--|-----------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|
| | Population esti- mated to middle of each Year. | Births registered. | Deaths at all Ages. | Deaths under 1 year. | Population esti- mated to middle of each year. | Births registered. | Deaths at all Ages. | Deaths under 1 year. | Population esti- mated to middle of each year. | Births registered. | Deaths at all Ages. | Deaths under 1 year. | Population esti- mated to middle of each year. | Births registered. | Deaths at all Ages. | Deaths under 1 year. | Population esti- mated to middle of each year. | Births registered. | Deaths at all Ages. | Deaths under 1 year. |
| 1890 | 1749 | 41 | 39 | 6 | 2621 | 72 | 48 | 12 | 3233 | 88 | 62 | 8 | 3783 | 87 | 73 | 12 | 2995 | 80 | 48 | 6 |
| 1891 | " | 35 | 24 | 2 | " | 73 | 34 | 9 | " | 86 | 60 | 12 | " | 106 | 60 | 9 | " | 79 | 59 | 7 |
| 1892 | " | 44 | 22 | 0 | " | 55 | 33 | 5 | " | 86 | 45 | 4 | " | 73 | 73 | 11 | " | 71 | 47 | 4 |
| 1893 | " | 44 | 24 | 1 | " | 69 | 33 | 3 | " | 83 | 37 | 9 | " | 117 | 88 | 6 | " | 74 | 43 | 2 |
| 1894 | " | 36 | 36 | 6 | " | 55 | 41 | 4 | " | 88 | 44 | 6 | " | 89 | 64 | 8 | " | 67 | 43 | 11 |
| 1895 | " | 49 | 28 | 4 | " | 77 | 47 | 6 | " | 77 | 41 | 6 | " | 95 | 77 | 11 | " | 71 | 55 | 12 |
| 1896 | " | 30 | 26 | 3 | " | 61 | 26 | 4 | " | 75 | 37 | 6 | " | 90 | 53 | 8 | " | 72 | 38 | 5 |
| 1897 | " | 34 | 25 | 3 | " | 52 | 51 | 14 | " | 77 | 43 | 3 | " | 83 | 46 | 5 | " | 70 | 40 | 11 |
| 1898 | " | 33 | 24 | 3 | " | 62 | 36 | 5 | " | 75 | 54 | 9 | " | 91 | 58 | 12 | " | 61 | 39 | 5 |
| 1899 | " | 46 | 25 | 3 | " | 48 | 45 | 10 | " | 72 | 43 | 5 | " | 85 | 51 | 10 | " | 46 | 39 | 7 |
| Aver'ges of Years 189 to 1899. | 1749 | 38.9 | 27.3 | 3.1 | 2621 | 62.4 | 39.4 | 7.2 | 3233 | 80.7 | 46.6 | 6.8 | 3783 | 91.4 | 64.3 | 9.2 | 2995 | 69.1 | 45.1 | 7.0 |
| 1900 | 1749 | 32. | 32. | 7. | 2621 | 57. | 39. | 1. | 3233 | 71. | 45. | 6. | | | | | | | | |
| Alteration in Sub-Districts. | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

TABLE III.

Cases of Infectious Disease notified during the Year.

| Notifiable Disease. | Cases Notified in Whole District | | | | | | Total Cases Notified in each Locality | | | | |
|---------------------|----------------------------------|--------|---------|----------|----------|----------------|---------------------------------------|----------|-------------|--------------|------------|
| | At all ages | 1 to 5 | 5 to 15 | 15 to 25 | 25 to 65 | 65 and upwards | Bratton Clovelly | Chagford | Hatherleigh | North Tawton | Okehampton |
| Diphtheria ... | 1 | | | | 1 | | | | | 1 | |
| Erysipelas ... | 16 | | 1 | 4 | 9 | 2 | | | 5 | 2 | 9 |
| Scarlet Fever ... | 13 | 5 | 5 | 2 | 1 | | | | 3 | 5 | 5 |
| Totals ... | 30 | 5 | 6 | 6 | 11 | 2 | | | 8 | 8 | 14 |

TABLE IV.
Causes of, and Ages at, Death during Year 1900.

| CAUSES OF DEATH. | DEATHS IN WHOLE DISTRICT AT SUBJOINED AGES. | | | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|----------|----------------|-----------------|------------------|------------------|-----------------|
| | All ages. | Under 1. | 1 and under 5. | 5 and under 15. | 15 and under 25. | 25 and under 65. | 65 and upwards. |
| Measles | 7 | 2 | 3 | 1 | | 1 | |
| Whooping Cough | 6 | 2 | 4 | | | | |
| Diphtheria and Membranous Croup | 1 | | | | | 1 | |
| Epidemic Influenza | 6 | | | | | 1 | 5 |
| Diarrhœa | 1 | 1 | | | | | |
| Phthisis | 14 | 2 | | | 2 | 9 | 1 |
| Other Tubercular Diseases | 2 | | 1 | 1 | | | |
| Cancer, Malignant Disease | 12 | | | 1 | | 7 | 4 |
| Bronchitis | 29 | 5 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 4 | 18 |
| Pneumonia | 9 | | | | | 5 | 4 |
| Alcoholism } Cirrhosis of Liver } | 1 | | | | | 1 | |
| Premature Birth | 6 | 6 | | | | | |
| Heart Diseases | 13 | | | | | 6 | 7 |
| Accidents | 6 | 1 | 2 | | | 2 | 1 |
| Suicides | 1 | | | | | 1 | |
| All other causes | 98 | 4 | 6 | 3 | 3 | 19 | 63 |
| All causes | 212 | 23 | 17 | 7 | 5 | 57 | 103 |

